What we claim is:

1. A ski selection system for allowing a user, having a weight within an anticipated range of user weights, to select a ski having suitable performance characteristics to match an unannounced weight of the user, the system comprising:

means for accessing the unannounced weight of the user to provide an accessed user weight without disclosing the unannounced weight;

means for assigning said accessed user weight into one of a set of predefined weight ranges to provide a selected user weight range and for providing an encrypted user weight indicator which is distinct to said selected user weight range,

said set of predefined weigh ranges collectively mapping onto the anticipated range of user weights, and

said encrypted user weight indicator being selected from a set of encrypted user weight indicators which correspond to said predefined weight ranges; and

a collection of distinct ski indicia suitable for association with skis, each of said ski indicia matching one of said encrypted user weight indicators so as to identify skis having performance characteristics suitable for users having a weight which falls within the one of said predefined weight ranges which is associated with the one of said encrypted user weight indicators which matches that particular ski indicium.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein said means for accessing the unannounced weight of the user and said means for assigning said accessed user weight into one of a set of predefined weight ranges and for providing an encrypted user weight indicator, in combination, further comprise:

a chart which displays said predefined weight ranges and correlates each of said predefined weight ranges with the corresponding one of said encrypted user weight indicators,

thereby allowing the user to compare the unannounced weight, when known, with said displayed predefined weight ranges to identify the one of said predefined weight ranges that includes the unannounced weight of the user and to identify the one of said encrypted user weight indicators that is correlated with said identified predefined weight range.

3. The system of claim 1 further comprising:

a weighing station having,

a platform on which the user can stand,

means for providing an output response proportional to the load applied to said platform,

said platform and said means for providing an output response, in combination, serving as said means for accessing the unannounced weight of the user to provide an accessed user weight, and

means for converting said output response into an appropriate one of said set of encrypted user weight indicators,

whereby said means for converting said output response serves as said means for assigning said accessed user weight into one of a set of

predefined weight ranges and for providing an encrypted user weight indicator.

5   4. The system of claim 1 wherein said means for accessing the unannounced weight of the user to provide an accessed user weight further comprises:

a user input interface for allowing the user to input the unannounced weight to provide an inputted weight; and

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further wherein said means for assigning said accessed user weight into one of a set of predefined weight ranges and for providing an encrypted user weight indicator further comprises:

a data processing unit communicating with said user input interface to receive said
15   inputted weight;

an instruction set for directing said data processing unit to compare said inputted weight to stored values for said predefined weight ranges and to select an appropriate one of said encrypted user weight indicators based on such comparison; and

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means for displaying said selected encrypted user weight indicator.

5. The system of claim 1 further comprising:

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a collection of ski groups, each of said ski groups having a plurality of skis which are all designed to be suitable for use by users having a weight falling within a particular one of said set of predefined weight ranges, the skis in each of said ski groups being marked with the one of said ski indicia which matches the one of said encrypted user weight

indicators that corresponds to the particular predefined weight range for which that particular ski is designed.

5   6. The system of claim 2 wherein said set of predefined weight ranges includes between three and eight predefined weight ranges.

7. The system of claim 3 wherein said set of predefined weight ranges includes between three
10   and eight predefined weight ranges.

8. The system of claim 6 wherein each of said encrypted user weight indicators and its matching ski indicia share a distinct color.

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9. The system of claim 6 wherein each of said encrypted user weight indicators is a number and each of said ski indicia is a ski length that corresponds to said number for the matching one of said set of encrypted user weight indicators.

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10. The system of claim 7 wherein each of said encrypted user weight indicators and its matching ski indicia share a distinct color.

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11. The system of claim 7 wherein each of said encrypted user weight indicators is a number and each of said ski indicia is a ski length that corresponds to said number for the matching one of said set of encrypted user weight indicators.

12. A collection of skis intended for users having weights within an anticipated range of user weights and designed use with a means for accessing the unannounced weight of a particular user to provide an accessed user weight and a means for assigning the accessed user weight into one of a set of predefined weight ranges to provide a selected user weight range and for providing an

5 encrypted user weight indicator which is distinct to the selected user weight range,

the predefined weight ranges being selected to collectively map onto the anticipated range of user weights, and

10 the encrypted user weight indicator being selected from a set of encrypted user weight indicators which correspond to the predefined weight ranges,

the collection of skis comprising:

15 a set of ski groups, each of said ski groups having a plurality of skis which are all designed to be suitable for use by users having a weight falling within a particular one of the predefined weight ranges, the skis in each of said ski groups being marked with distinctive ski indicia which match the one of the set of encrypted user weight indicators that corresponds to the particular one of the predefined weight ranges for which that

20 particular ski is designed.

13. The collection of skis of claim 12 wherein the encrypted user weight indicators and said ski indicia have matching colors.

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14. The collection of skis of claim 12 wherein the encrypted user weight indicators are numbers and said ski indicia are ski lengths which match said numbers of the encrypted user weight indicators.

15. A method for allowing a user having a weight within an anticipated range of user weights to select a ski having suitable characteristics to match the unannounced weight of the user, the method comprising the steps of:

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    defining a set of user weight ranges, said user weight ranges being defined so as to collectively map onto the anticipated range of user weights;

    establishing a set of encrypted user weight indicators, each of which corresponds to one

10   of said user weight ranges;

    providing a collection of skis which are sorted into groups, each of the skis in a particular group having performance characteristics suitable for users having any weight which falls within a particular one of said user weight ranges;

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    providing a set of ski indicia matched in visual appearance with said encrypted user weight indicators;

    associating the ski indicia with each ski in the group of skis having performance

20   characteristics suitable for users having a weight which falls within the one of said user weight ranges that corresponds to the one of said encrypted user weight indicators which matches that particular one of the ski indicia;

    accessing the unannounced weight of the user to provide an accessed user weight, without

25   disclosing the unannounced weight;

    assigning said accessed user weight into an appropriate one of said user weight ranges and identifying to the user the one of said encrypted user weight indicators which corresponds to the one of said user weight ranges into which said accessed user weight is

assigned; and

selecting a pair of skis associated with ski indicia which match said identified one of said encrypted user weight indicators.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said step of accessing the unannounced weight of the user further comprises the step of:

providing a known weight of the user; and

further wherein said step of assigning said accessed user weight and identifying the corresponding one of said encrypted user weight indicators further comprises the steps of:

providing a reference chart marked with the limits of each of said weight ranges and with said corresponding encrypted user weight indicators for each of said user weight ranges;

comparing the known weight of the user to said marked limits to determine within which of said user weight ranges the known weight of the user falls; and

using said reference chart to identify the one of said encrypted user weight indicators which corresponds to said determined weight range.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein said step of accessing the unannounced weight of the user further comprises the step of:

weighing the user on a weighing station; and

further wherein said step of assigning said accessed user weight and identifying the corresponding one of said encrypted user weight indicators further comprises the step of:

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      displaying on the weighing station the one of said encrypted user weight indicators that corresponds to the one of said user weight ranges which includes the unannounced weight of the user.

18. The method of claim 15 wherein the step of establishing a set of encrypted user weight indicators is done such that said encrypted user weight indicators for each of said user weight ranges corresponds to a sub-range of that particular user weight range, and

further wherein said step of assigning said accessed user weight and identifying the corresponding one of said encrypted user weight indicators further comprises the step of:

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      if none of said encrypted user weight indicators corresponds to said accessed user weight, providing a query to the user to aid in selecting an appropriate one of said encrypted user weight indicators.

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19. The method of claim 18 wherein said step of accessing the unannounced weight of the user further comprises the step of:

      providing a known weight of the user; and

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further wherein said step of assigning said accessed user weight and identifying the corresponding one of said encrypted user weight indicators further comprises the steps of:

      providing a reference chart marked with the limits of each of said weight ranges and with

said corresponding encrypted user weight indicators for each of said user weight ranges;

comparing said known weight of the user to said marked limits to determine within which of said user weight ranges said known weight of the user falls; and

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using said reference chart to identify the one of said encrypted user weight indicators which corresponds to said determined weight range.

10   20. The method of claim 18 wherein said step of accessing the unannounced weight of the user further comprises the step of:

weighing the user on a weighing station; and

15   further wherein said step of assigning said accessed user weight and identifying the corresponding one of said encrypted user weight indicators further comprises the step of:

displaying on the weighing station the one of said encrypted user weight indicators that corresponds to the one of said user weight ranges which includes the unannounced weight

20   of the user.